

REMARKS

According to the Examiner, the application contains claims directed to four distinct inventions, namely, those shown in Groups I, II, III, and IV. The Examiner alleges that the inventions of Groups I-IV do not relate to a single general inventive concept under PCT Rule 13.1 because they lack the same or corresponding special technical features. The Examiner alleges in particular that the common technical feature in all of the Groups is the method of producing and treating the sheet, but that this element cannot be a special technical feature under the PCT Rules because the element is shown in the prior art. The Examiner cites U.S. Patent No. 6,149,738 to Dahlback as the prior art, which is alleged to disclose a method of producing a sheet for a component in a fuel assembly for a nuclear light water reactor that is substantially identical to the claimed method and that the inventions in each of Group I-IV lack the same or corresponding special technical features. Accordingly, unity of invention is allegedly lacking and the Examiner requires that the claims be restricted.

The Examiner has required the election of a single Group of claims for prosecution on the merits to which the claims shall be restricted.

As stated above, Applicant hereby elects with traverse Group I. Claims 18-26 are the claims encompassing the elected invention.

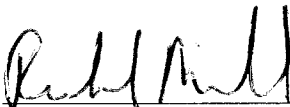
Applicant respectfully disagrees with the Examiner's reasons for the restriction requirement and, as stated above, traverses the requirement. One reason for the traversal of this restriction is that there is a common inventive concept that is shared by all the claims of the application. In particular, all the claims of the application (both method claims and device claims) include features that concern the production and treatment of the sheet of a particular alloy. One feature of the present invention is that the sheet is stretched during the heat treatment (step c of claim 18). This stretching is not suggested by the prior art. In particular, U.S. Patent No. 6,149,738 to Dahlback cited by the Examiner does not suggest any stretching step as defined in the claims of the present application. In fact, Applicant believes that the present invention provides a completely new approach concerning the production and treatment of sheets for components in fuel assemblies for nuclear light water reactors. For at least this reason, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw the restriction requirement.

Applicant believes that the foregoing election fully complies with the Office Action and that all claims of the application are allowable. If the Examiner believes that a telephone

conference with Applicant's attorneys would be advantageous to the disposition of this case, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned.

Applicant believes that no fees are due with the submission of this Response. If, however, it is deemed that any fees are in fact due, they may be charged to Deposit Account No. 503342 maintained by Applicant's attorneys.

Respectfully submitted,

By: 

Richard R. Michaud
Registration No. 40,088
Attorney for Applicant

Michaud-Duffy Group LLP
306 Industrial Park Road, Suite 206
Middletown, CT 06457-1532
Tel: (860) 632-7200
Fax: (860) 632-8269